

Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District
Supervisor Meeting
September 8, 2021 at 6:30 PM
795 Bonnyvale Rd, Brattleboro, VT 05301/ Online via Zoom
Minutes

Present: Supervisors: Linda Corse, Meg Kluge, Geof Dolman, Pieter van Loon; District Manger Cory Ross, NRCS South Zone District Conservationist Phyllicxia Moore

New Business

1. NRCS Update and Introductions

Phyllicxia is the new zone conservationist for the South Zone, working out of the Rutland Office. Phyllicxia worked with Cory to get quick turnaround using an online survey from customers and participants in Windham County so we could submit a local fund pool proposal for the South Zone. The South Zone is the only zone to submit a local fund pool proposal. This proposal was primarily directed by feedback from Windham County producers. This will help local producers to get funded without having to compete on a national level. Proposal will go to the state technical committee meeting in October, where it will be decided whether or not the proposal moves forward for the coming year. Will help address some of the erosion concerns from recent storm, as well as invasive species and aquatic passage issues. Only asking for \$100,000 right now, but can ask for more funds later based on need. South Zone includes Windham, Bennington, Windsor and parts of Orange County.

Plan for next year is to have an in-person local working group (COVID-permitting) so everyone can have the opportunity to provide feedback. Ideally want the meetings to done in July.

The State Technical Committee may make changes to our proposal, but the selected practices were based primarily on the 5 resource concerns that were identified.

Phyllicxia asked what the board would like from the board as a zone conservationist. Board expressed a desire to not feel forgotten by State and Federal agencies. South zone has had a lot of turnover recently. The plan is to get a good, solid, consistent team that can build together.

2. FY 22 Work Plan

This work plan is a deliverable for our core services agreement. Questions from the board:

-Seems like a lot of hours for the plant sale. Perhaps this will be less because of Cory having more experience.

-Are board hours accurate? Are board members completing some of these tasks while at the meeting instead of on their own time?

-Question about board training/orientation as a task. Board expressed a desire for more gathering of supervisors at the state level, which should be more possible with remote meeting capabilities.

Board members will share additional thoughts with Cory prior to submission of the work plan to NRCC.

Should we share board supervisor email addresses on the website? We should ask about rules and flexibility regarding using emails for conducting business.

Linda can ask council about this.

Motion made to approve the work plan, 2nd. Motion passed.

3. Youth Associate Supervisor

Youth Services was involved in a youth associate supervisor position in the past. Rich Earth Institute participated in this effort in the past.

We could check with BUHS or the CCV to see if they have an interested program. What role would a youth supervisor have on our board? Any associate can attend board meetings and is asked to be brought in on specific tasks as needed. Young person would be encouraged to attend meetings, ask questions like any member, participate in a few projects. Could this person help with Envirothon?

Cory will ask other DM's if they've tried having a youth supervisor.

Decided this item can stay on the agenda for the future. Can we find a grant to help fund exploration of this idea? This would be part of building the district's capacity.

4. Core funding request from Vermont Conservation Districts.

Questions about whether this effort will standardize the districts in a way that eliminates their ability to meet local needs. The Board doesn't want to see districts become another agency in the state. They do not think we need more bureaucracy.

Avoid some of the very specific language in the current letter because we want to avoid being overly specific on a general request.

How are districts funded and managed in other states?

Concerns about losing independence in exchange for funding.

Will districts have the opportunity to review the final letter before it goes to the State?

Would prefer that the funding was just for a DM and have less strings, rather than get more money and get more strings.

Districts want the ability to remain diverse in terms of meeting the needs of their districts.

The board has some concerns about including the changes to the supervisor election process with this proposal. Concerns about trying to hit too many points with this letter, also some concern about changing the election of supervisors to be part of the town elections. Would supervisors have to collect petitions in every town? Would they have to win in every town?

Section about re-writing the charter - this could become like opening Pandora's box. Proposing a change to statute shouldn't be the first step. Perhaps this can be considered eventually, but not right away - needs to be carefully thought out.

The board would like the effort to focus on the request for funding now, focus on changing the legislation later.

Could changing representation on boards be accomplished without changing the legislation?

How is the final document going to be produced? Need to have the supervisors on board with this effort and provide them with the opportunity to provide input into the crafting of this letter/effort.

Who is this effort representing? Does this represent all DMs, all supervisors, who?

The board feels that the final letter needs to be approved by all district boards before it can go out under the auspices of "all districts."

How would the job description change with funding? Who would write the job description? Would the board still have this role?

If the message is: there is this statute that has not been funded, it's time to fund it. We can get everyone lined up to try to make this case in time for the legislature to go to work. If we try to include all this other stuff - it's an entirely different thing and will be very challenging to achieve.

The other thing about having a single point is its easier to build consensus throughout the districts.

Cory will keep the board informed as this develops, even between board meetings.

Ongoing Business:

Plant Sale - is Green Up Day a concern with May 7th? Mother's Day is the 8th. Decided to stick with May 7th.

District Manager's Report

Game of Logging: Could we host it at McCulloch?

Secretary's Report

The board still does not have minutes from the June meeting to review and approve.

Linda will review her notes and create draft minutes for the June meeting. She will share these with the board prior to the October meeting.

Motion made to approve meeting minutes from August 18th. Motion passed.

October meeting scheduled for October 6th.

November meeting will be November 3rd